

News from the Netherlands Health Inspectorate

<http://www.igz.nl/actueel/nieuwsberichten/natriumcarb>

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The administration of sodium bicarbonate to cancer patients is hazardous.

The infusion of sodium bicarbonate to vulnerable patients is hazardous and ineffective. This is the conclusion of two expert physicians who wrote reports on request of The Netherlands Health Inspectorate (Inspectie voor de Gezondheidszorg, IGZ). The IGZ asked them for advice when in 2007 a patient with cancer died in the Free University Medical Centre in Amsterdam after she had received sodium bicarbonate in a clinic in Bilthoven. Currently, the clinic has, under the pressure of the IGZ, stopped to administer this therapy and will not restart it. In the meantime it has not been firmly established that the patient has died as a consequence of the sodium bicarbonate administration. The Public Prosecutor is still investigating this.

Based on the expert report, the IGZ has first of all reached the conclusion that there are no scientific data that justify the administration of sodium bicarbonate to patients with cancer for other indications than described in the official prescription information. There is no scientific proof whatsoever showing that this therapy cures or can slow its progress.

The IGZ concludes that the administration of sodium bicarbonate even has risks for patients with high blood pressure, patients with diseases of lungs, heart, or kidneys and for patients with cancer. This is certainly the case if a number of specific blood levels are not monitored daily before, during and after the treatment. The balance of the body can become completely disturbed when large amounts are administered. In severely ill patients this may lead to organ damage. In sick people there is in fact irresponsible health care if this product is administered without monitoring.

Given these risks and because there is no scientific basis for the effectiveness of sodium bicarbonate apart from the registered indications, the IGZ concludes that physicians should not apply this treatment. If physicians administer these despite this warning and/or the IGZ receives reports of cases thereof, the reports will of course be investigated, whereby the aforementioned considerations will play an important role. The IGZ will not hesitate to inform the Disciplinary Medical Board.